

# Ladywood School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105274
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	355744
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Brian Padgett HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	78
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Pam Livesey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sally McFarlane
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Masefield Road Little Lever, Bolton Lancashire BL3 1NG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 333400
<b>Fax number</b>	01204 333405
<b>Email address</b>	office@ladywood.bolton.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Eleven lessons were observed taught by nine of the teachers. Discussions, including telephone calls, were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, governors, staff, and with a number of representatives from the school's partners. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, such as that charting pupils' progress, safeguarding arrangements and the school's plans for the future. The responses to 43 parental questionnaires were analysed, along with responses to questionnaires from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress pupils make and whether this is affected by the nature of their learning difficulty or background.
- The pupils' preparation for life beyond school and that for the next stage in their education.
- The effectiveness of the work of the school with parents, carers and other partners.
- The work the school undertakes with other schools and whether this benefits Ladywood staff and pupils.

## Information about the school

Ladywood School caters for pupils of primary school age with complex learning needs. There is a wide range of learning needs most often characterised by moderate or severe learning difficulty and autism. Each pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils join the school in their Reception Year but some join later from other Bolton primary schools. The majority of pupils are boys from White British backgrounds although about a quarter of pupils are girls and about one in five is from a minority-ethnic background. About a third of the pupils are understood to be entitled to free school meals. Five of the pupils were looked after by the local authority at the time of the inspection.

The school has achieved many national awards. These include Healthy School status, Investor in People (Gold), Active School, Artsmark (Gold), Sing-Up (Silver) and the International School Award. It has also been awarded the local authority's Inclusion Kitemark at gold level. It has won national recognition for its work with parents and carers, inclusion and for educating pupils on the autistic spectrum. The headteacher is a National Leader in Education and the school a National Support School.

The school shares its site with Masefield Primary School. In January, the school became responsible for the Bolton Outreach Service, providing support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities within the local authority. This service was not inspected, although inspectors evaluated the impact of the arrangements on the school and its pupils.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

Ladywood is an outstanding special school. It is exceptionally effective in nearly all respects. Although judged as outstanding in its previous inspection, it has improved significantly since then; for example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in its use of assessment to inform teaching and learning. It has maintained its traditional strengths and continues, for example, to provide top-class care, support and guidance for all its pupils, who staff come to know extremely well.

Staff at all levels have a complete commitment to do their best for children with complex learning difficulties. This results in common values and excellent teamwork. Staff are proud to belong to the school. They forge exceptional relationships with parents and carers, and work with them as partners. The school plays a pivotal and highly regarded role with all the external agencies in health and social care that are involved with the pupils.

The school constantly and accurately evaluates its work. Teaching and pupils' progress are subject to rigorous and regular scrutiny by leaders and managers. The school continually seeks new ideas and opportunities for further improvement, particularly through professional development. Leadership is exceptionally effective and is distributed throughout the whole staff. Governance is strong. Such strong leadership has proved vital as the school extends its influence to other schools, in order to support their development. Strengths in leadership and management are also important as the school takes responsibility for the local authority's outreach service. The increasing remit of key leaders has not diverted the school or weakened development in any way; rather the opposite, staff relish the new challenges. The school is in the strongest of positions to sustain further improvement.

The outcomes for pupils are that they make the best possible progress and thoroughly enjoy school, regardless of the nature of their learning difficulty, whether girl or boy, or whatever their social background. The teaching is exceptionally effective for children across the range of learning difficulties, including autism, and the curriculum is rich and exciting. A particular feature of the school is its high aspirations for its pupils. As well as promoting excellent progress in learning it challenges its pupils in their personal development, putting them in situations that are outside their comfort zone, such as how to behave in a restaurant, for example. Pupils are often integrated with pupils from mainstream schools. By providing excellent support, the school helps pupils meet these challenges, broadening their ideas of what they can do and preparing them very well for life beyond school.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The inspection team makes no recommendations as there are no significant areas for improvement.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Most children enter the school with levels of attainment that are very low for their age. All have been identified as having significant learning difficulties. Each has a statement of special educational needs on entry or is in the process of obtaining one. During their time at Ladywood, pupils make exceptional progress, regardless of their learning disability. Exceptional progress has been sustained in each of the last three years. Pupils often exceed their targets. Some pupils make spectacular progress. Often, these pupils arrive from mainstream primary schools. They thrive in an environment where their learning, social and emotional needs are met and achieve exceptionally well.

Pupils' self-esteem and confidence are developed very well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Inclusion and integration are strong features of the work of the school and pupils mix easily with each other and with pupils from other schools, especially with those from the adjacent Masefield Primary School. Pupils' learning about being healthy and keeping safe are outstanding; many of the pupils eat healthy meals and snacks and they understand the need for and take part in much physical exercise. Pupils with autism are often sensitive about food and they are being helped to understand more about food through growing their own fruit and vegetables. Pupils take significant responsibility around school, including running a school council and being involved in recycling. Their behaviour is good. Attendance is at similar levels to schools nationally. However, many pupils, especially younger ones, have significant medical needs that require treatment off-site. This reduces attendance but is unavoidable.

Pupils' exceptional progress, including in learning basic skills, means they are being prepared for economic well-being very well. Their engagement in activities that challenge them, such as joining in choirs with mainstream pupils and going out into the community, helps raise their aspirations for what they can achieve and builds their confidence and skills-for-life extremely well.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

The excellent progress pupils make is the result of a curriculum, teaching and care of the highest order. The curriculum is very well tailored to meet the needs of the pupils with special educational needs; this is especially the case for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is a clear emphasis on equipping pupils with the core skills of reading, writing, mathematics, computer skills and scientific thinking in small, oft-repeated steps. Equally, the curriculum is designed to promote all aspects of pupils' personal development. A particular feature of the experiences that are planned for pupils is the amount of challenge that so effectively develops resilience and confidence. Learning opportunities are exciting, often involving visitors coming into school or pupils going out of school. The inspection took place during the school's Art Week, when the whole school was involved in creative activities. For example, professional actors and drama specialists put on plays, and storytellers in costume engaged pupils in stories and taught them songs. For many of the pupils, being removed from their routines and coping with excitement are challenging. However, with excellent support, the pupils gained much in enjoyment, knowledge and understanding.

The quality of care, guidance and support is of the highest order throughout all the school's work. Ladywood is a hugely positive place. All staff know all pupils extremely well. The systems for transition of pupils into the school or onto their next phase of their education are outstanding and illustrate very well the care and attention to individual

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children's needs and to those of their families. Staff link with others superbly well, acting as the central reference point for parents, carers and the multitude of professionals involved in the treatment and care of the pupils. Just a few pupils move onto mainstream secondary schools and these transitions are managed very successfully.

There are many strengths in teaching. For one, teaching assistants play a prominent, positive role. All are highly trained, many are very experienced. All the adults in each class take a full teaching role with groups or individuals. Behind the scenes, teachers and teaching assistants plan lessons together, so all know exactly what is intended. Teachers successfully execute coherent class lessons but where the learning aims for each pupil are individually tailored to their needs and learning plans. The use of assessments in charting progress and setting targets has improved significantly of late, which is making teaching and learning exceptionally focused for teachers and pupils. Behaviour management is excellent. Many pupils have challenging behaviour that has the potential to disrupt their own learning and that of others. The school presents as calm and purposeful and behaviour is good.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership and management of the school are extremely effective. The headteacher and governing body have built a staff team who fully share their vision for the school. The result is a remarkably cohesive staff with high morale. The governing body is effective, bringing together a good mix of people with professional and lay perspectives to challenge and support school leaders. All connected with the school, particularly parents and carers and associated professionals from health and social care, gave testimony to the staff's complete dedication to the pupils. The wide range of professional development undertaken, the rigorous self-analysis and the embracing of new ideas are all clearly focused on making the school even more effective in supporting the pupils. The outreach and support provided for other schools enables Ladywood staff to observe different practices and to bring new ideas back to the school. The headteacher and governing body routinely ask what benefits will there be for their pupils in assessing new ventures.

Senior staff are strong leaders in their own rights. The senior team has the confidence of staff and achieves much by positive support, which is highly appreciated by the staff. The monitoring of performance is very rigorous. Data analysis has improved significantly and contributes strongly to the school's exemplary practice of self-evaluation. It constantly challenges itself to be better and all staff, including support staff, accept leadership roles and contribute to the school's development.

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Procedures for safeguarding and child protection are robust. Equal opportunities are promoted extremely well, as can be seen in the many ways pupils are included and integrated within and outside of school and in the excellent way community cohesion is promoted at school, local, national and international levels.

Partnerships are exemplary. That with health and social care professionals is extremely secure and productive. There are very well established partnerships with businesses and voluntary community organisations. The partnership with mainstream schools is strong and valued by the schools. That with the neighbouring school is particularly strong, with links at governing body level. The partnership with parents and carers is most impressive. Communication is effective despite the spread-out nature of the school's community. The school has facilitated an active support network of parents and carers past and present. One parent said, 'We provide a lifeline for each other.' Parents support each other as a self-help group; for example, accessing adult education, including basic skills and acquiring computer literacy. These skills help them support their children with work at home. The school provides excellent value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The Reception classes provide an excellent introduction to school for children with a wide range of learning difficulties, including autism. Children settle very well, parents and carers say they really enjoy school. They make outstanding progress from what are often very low starting points.

The principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage are fully implemented. Outdoors has been developed particularly well and children have opportunities to learn in the fresh air in all weathers. There was clear evidence that some of the children were more motivated to learn outdoors than inside. The potential conflict between the child-chosen activities



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promoted by the Early Years Foundation Stage and the learning needs of children with autism is managed very well. The school has evolved an approach that is faithful to the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage but that which provides the structured environment and limited choice that such children find most effective for learning.

The Reception staff work very closely with a wide range of partners to ensure a successful transition to school. These partners include parents and carers, children's previous settings and with child development specialists, to ensure a successful transition to school. The teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants and the high levels of knowledge about each child that are such a feature of the main school are fully in evidence in the Reception classes. Each child has a key worker who cares for them in particular. Assessment of learning and the use of assessment to plan next steps are extremely thorough. Communications between school and home are very good, overcoming the difficulties that arise when children come to school in taxis. Leaders and managers of the Early Years Foundation Stage are enthusiastic and highly committed to the children. Their work is of very high quality.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Views of parents and carers

The parent and carer questionnaire responses about the school were very positive. For example, all those who responded indicated that their children enjoyed school and that school kept them safe. Individual written comments were often hugely appreciative of the staff, their care and responsiveness to their children's needs and explaining how much their children enjoyed coming to school.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ladywood School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 78 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	79	9	21	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	86	6	14	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	37	86	3	7	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	77	9	21	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	37	86	5	12	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	77	7	16	3	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	58	15	35	2	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	29	67	11	26	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	84	6	14	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	74	10	23	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	67	11	26	3	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	36	84	6	14	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	84	5	12	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



10 June 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Ladywood School, Bolton, BL3 1NG**

You may remember when inspectors from Ofsted visited your school. We came during Arts Week. Our job was to see how well you are learning and to report this to your parents and others. Lots of people are very interested in knowing how well you are doing. I would like to thank all the pupils who spoke to us during the inspection. Thank you for making us welcome, we really enjoyed our visit.

I have some very good news to give you. We judged your school to be an outstanding school. It was judged outstanding at its last inspection in 2008 but it has got even better since then. There are many reasons why Ladywood is such a good school. Here they are in a nutshell.

When you join the school you make great progress in your learning, no matter what difficulties you have when you arrive. You do this because you are taught really well and also because the staff really care about you and get to know you. They make school as interesting as possible, in lessons and outside of lessons, like having an Arts Week. We saw how well you enjoyed school. You told us you feel safe. I recall how Class 2a had fun listening to the story of The Gruffalo and singing songs in the storytellers' tent. We saw that your teachers challenge you to try new things. You go off to restaurants and mix with children from other schools. We know that some of you find occasions like this difficult but the school is helping you prepare for the time when you will become an adult. This is working extremely well.

Behind the scenes, every single person, starting with your headteacher, is 100% determined you will have the best education possible. It shows. Staff make sure that your parents and carers are kept informed and they work closely with doctors, nurses, therapists, social workers, your next schools and all the people whose job it is to support you. Staff train hard and keep themselves up to date to make sure you get the best opportunities to succeed. They are experts. Other schools come to your school to see how they can get better.

Ladywood is so good we have left no recommendations for improvement. That is not the same as saying it will not get better. Mrs McFarlane and the staff have plenty of ideas to help you gain even more from your time at Ladywood. But for now, have a pat on the back. You did very well.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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